ABSTRACT

The present invention teaches methods and systems for providing full digital services such as VOD, digital broadcast, as well as a universal set-top-box (STB) capable of handling this variety of digital services. A plurality of hardware architectures and complimentary data transmission methods identifying the distinct services through an electronic program guide enable such transmission. The universal STB of the present invention is capable of distinguishing the different services based upon information received in the electronic program guide, and is designed with unique hardware architecture including a large buffer. The present invention further provides viewing options such as multiple broadcasts and virtual VCR time-shifting features including pausing, recording, and freeze framing a broadcast without suffering the volatility and poor quality of an Internet streaming broadcast. Still further, this variety of digital services is provided via a uni-directional communication link.